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PROJECT 13.

BY- ANDERSON, CLARA M.
MINNEAPOLIS PUBLIC SCHOOLS, MINN.

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A PROGRAM IN LOW-INCOME AREAS IN MINNEAPOLIS PROVIDED THE SERVICES OF HIGH SCHOOL COUNSELORS TO GRADUATES AND DROPOUTS BY (1) OFFERING VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE TO UNEMPLOYED GRADUATES AND ACTIVELY ASSISTING IN JOB PLACEMENT, (2) ENCOURAGING THE RETURN OF DROPOUTS TO SCHOOL AND ASSISTING IN THEIR READJUSTMENT TO ACADEMIC LIFE, (3) ORGANIZING DATA ON CLIENTS FOR USE IN CURRENT AND FUTURE STUDIES, INCLUDING CURRICULUM REFORMS, AND (4) ORGANIZING A SEPARATE SUMMER PROGRAM TO INDUCE DROPOUTS TO RESUME SCHOOLING. RESPONSE TO THE PROGRAM WAS ENCOURAGING, WITH THE COUNSELORS MAKING NEARLY 3,000 INDIVIDUAL CONTACTS IN THE INITIAL 6-MONTH PERIOD. (NC)

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PROJECT 13

By Clara M. Anderson

Central High School, Minneapolis, Minnesota

How far should the high school counselor reach out into the community to assist former students? This was the question the counselors of Central High School asked themselves as each former student came to the office for counseling.

There was the graduate of two years ago who came into the office pleading, "You said that if we wanted to come back for help, we could. I finished my drafting course last week. Now, I'd like to discuss the type of job I should take." I asked him why he came back to high school for counseling. He replied, "You know me. I'm used to talking to you."

There was the student with low academic aptitudes for reading and arithmetic. He had held jobs, in three small shops, as a shoe salesman succeeding so well that he was promoted in each job to a management post. Then, the employers discovered that he could not read instructions. As a non-promotable young man, he was fired. Finally he came back to the high school counselor to ask, "Where do I go now?"

There was the young sailor, on his last leave before his term of service with the Navy was over, who came in for information on trade schools so he could make plans for civilian life.

And there were the employers, several every day, who called or wrote to the counselor's office for recommendations. Our high school is the last school house for many of our students so it is the place

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employers contact for educational records. Each recommendation has a story behind it. I remember a man writing to us, asking how he could gain his high school diploma in just a few weeks. He was a high school drop out. A new company president had issued an order stating that every person in an office position must be a high school graduate. Our drop out wanted to anticipate the company's check on his high school record.

These were but a few of the types of counselor contacts we had with former students. Perhaps we had brought this problem on ourselves, as counselors, by keeping an open door policy; an open door to the community as well as to the school. We had told students, both graduates and drop outs, that the counselors were available to the former students if they wished to come back for counseling assistance. And they came back. They came back in such numbers that we found ourselves, during many weeks, spending a least a third of our time with former students. But, our counselor-student ratio was based on the number of students enrolled in school. We had to ask ourselves if we were being fair to these students still in school when we spent so much time with former students. Project 13 became our answer. If the community really needed the services of a school counselor for former students, then let us provide a counselor for these students.

With the decision to request a thirteenth year counselor came the question, who should be the counselor? Should we bring in a specialist or should the counselor be the school counselor the students knew? We decided that the response of the community to the counselors was a response to familiar persons. Most of the students returning were recent graduates or drop outs. The senior counselor would be the person in closest contact with the recent graduates and should be the thirteenth

year counselor the next year. In our school, we rotate our positions, and the post high counselor's position would rotate among all the counselors over a period of years. We felt it was important to keep the post high counselor position a post within the school counseling department. After all, this was the expressed need to which the former students had responded.

We presented our plans for funding under, Title 2 of the Economic Opportunity Act. In the proposal we expressed our purpose in this fashion:

> "The post high counselor program will provide a school contact with drop outs and unemployed recent graduates in the low income areas of the Minneapolis Public High Schools. The program will help disadvantaged youth to become aware of and utilize resources in the school and the community. This special counseling service will help them make appropriate use of resources such as the Youth Opportunity Center, the Manpower Development Training Program, and other resources in the community which will be organized as part of the total War on Poverty. The post high school counselors will also serve as an information link between the school faculties and the Community Action Program in Minneapolis. The post high school counselor program will enable Minneapolis to collect significant data on a number of questions relating to the drop out and the youth employment problems as well as data needed to institute curricular changes to meet the needs of disadvantaged youth.
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> Two groups of disadvantaged youth from areas of high poverty concentration will be the primary beneficiaries of this program. These groups are the drop outs and unemployed recent graduates. The post high school counselor will reach out to these youth, help them

understand themselves, locate and utilize resources in the school and in the community-at-large.

This program will also provide a positive continuing link between the Minneapolis Public High Schools serving the areas of high concentration of poverty and the various programs operating as part of the Community Action Program in the total War on Poverty. The post high school counselors will participate as members of the Education Task Force of the Economic Opportunity Committee."

Based on this proposal, the counselors then developed a job description giving guidelines for actual operation of the program. The job description gives some idea of the scope of the counselor's work during an average week. It reads like this: "One qualified high school counselor and one clerical person will be added to each of the four downtown Minneapolis high schools which serve the areas of major concentration on poverty in Minneapolis, Currently these schools assign a counselor to a new tenth grade class and this counselor works with the same class for three years. (Grade 10, 11, and 12). Under this plan a counselor will continue to work with the same class for a fourth year after they leave high school. The task of the post high counselor shall be:

....To provide a school contact with drop outs and unemployed recent graduates in low income area Minneapolis Public High Schools.

.... To serve as an information link between the school faculties and the Community Action Program in Minneapolis. This program will also provide a positive continuing link between the Minneapolis Public Schools serving the areas of high concentration of poverty and the various programs operating as part of the Community Action Program in the total War on Poverty.

.... To keep abreast of all programs available under the War on Poverty and transmit this information to all faculty members in high schools to which they are assigned.

.... To personally contact drop outs from the high school areas to indicate the counselor's availability to help him explore possibilities for returning to school or for using other programs designed for training or actual job placement. (The counselor will be able to meet the youth in the school, in the settlements, in the neighborhood centers, or in the youth's home).

.... To indicate, through the public media and through conversations with area youth and the parents and in neighborhood groups, that he is available to help unemployed graduates to examine possible sources of training or future education available to them through the existing programs.

.... To assist neighborhood residents who indicate a concern about the problems of education and youth employment in working with citizen action groups participating in the neighborhood served by the downtown high schools.

.... To collect data on recent drop outs and unemployed graduates which can be used in current and future studies (a) to determine why drop outs leave high school prior to graduation, and (b) to determine what drop outs will participate in when they return to school.

.... To determine what drop outs and unemployed recent graduates know about community resources and how these resources and services can be made more meaningful to these youth.

.... To determine, through intensive follow-up of all class drop outs and graduates, how the school curriculum can be modified to be made

more useful to low income youth. This program will enable Minneapolis to collect significant data on a number of questions relating to the drop outs and youth employment problems as well as data needed to institute curricular changes to meet the needs of disadvantaged youth.

.... To counsel with former students (graduates and drop outs) who seek this help.

.... To set up and implement, during the summer months, a back-to-school program for former students who have not completed high school.

.... To assist other counseling staff in counseling with students who come to the school for the first time. (The counselor would relieve the regular counselor of some of the heavy transiency load during the regular school year. The number of students involved would depend on each individual school).

.... To keep a careful record of all contacts (telephone, conference and interview contacts with students, parents, and agency representatives) in order that a very careful evaluation may be made of this total program."

This is Project 13, the expansion of the high school counseling staff to give assistance to students in the community, but no longer in school. Has it been successful? What is success when you are counseling with students or former students? Do we count the number of counselor contacts from the community? Do we count the number of counselees now employed or re-enrolled in school? Do we count the number of new diplomas? Or do we count the maturity of decisions made by the counselees whether they involve school or not?

Whatever we call success, this is what has happened in the office of the post high counselor at Central High School. In the four month period

from July 5, 1965, when the office opened, through November 1, 1965, the counselor had:

771	Individual student contacts and counseling sessions
1,218	Telephone conversations
27	Tests administered
1,240	Items of correspondence
94	Non-student conferences

Perhaps a breakdown a some of these counselor contacts would be interesting. The 1,218 telephone conversations can be grouped into four main catagories: those dealing with inquiries about employment; those made to obtain follow-up information; those made to facilitate referrals; and those giving information about Central High School.

The 1,240 items of correspondence included job recommendations, college applications, follow-up letters to drop outs, requests for information in regard to high school graduation and high school credits, and a variety of individual requests.

Statistics for the six month initial period of the program show that the four post high counselors had:

2,969	Individual student contacts and counseling sessions
28	Group conferences with students
5,680	Phone calls
54	Tests administered
5,382	Items of correspondence
406	Non-student conferences

These are impressive figures when they show the use the former students are making of the counseling services now available to them.

Here is another way to judge the success of the program. A follow-up study of the senior class of 1965, the first class to have a full-time counselor available throughout the summer months, shows only 4% of the class unemployed in November. Most of the unemployed were awaiting a call to the armed services or were deciding on which type of schooling to enter. An additional 3% of the graduates had moved and left no forwarding address. The rest of the class was in school or employed.

Another criterion for evaluation might be the number of referrals. During the five month period from July 5 through December 15, the counselor noted 242 referrals to schools and to community agencies:

59 persons were enrolled in high school, either as full-time students, or as students with modified programs.

22 were enrolled in evening school, or in accredited correspondence schools.

6 were referred for General Education Development tests.

16 were referred to trade schools.

44 were referred to colleges.

42 were referred directly to employers, or received assistance on application forms.

38 were referred to the federal sponsored programs.

8 entered the armed services.

7 were referred to social agencies, or rehabilitation facilities.

During this same five month period the counselor assisted:

23 who needed no referral after counseling on personal or educational problems.

who had problems for which there was no possible referral source.

The post high school counselor is a counselor in a high school setting. What has been the result for the regular program at Central High School? Some aspects of the program trouble the faculty. The pattern of school statistics seems to indicate a decline in the quality of education, and schools are judged by statistical records. In spite of concerted efforts, the percentage of absentees each day remains high. The drop outs who have returned are on the list with more frequency than the average student. This is to be expected. Yet, if they hadn't returned to school, the absentee record of the school would look better. So would the drop out rate, the grade point average, and the transiency rate. Counseling has brought the problem students back to the school, so the school records show an increase in problems with the increase of counseling.

Problem students who have left school, often with fireworks, are seen in the halls on their way to the post high counselor's office. Teachers become concerned about the concentration of this type of student wandering the halls of the school building.

Students now start school at 8:20, at 9:30, at 10:30, or later. You see, if we can't make regular day workers out of the returning students, we try to make regular swing shift workers out of late risers. This means the regularity of the school day has been modified to adjust to the returning drop out. Irregular patterns are difficult for faculties to cope with.

The returning students have experienced adult life. They have held jobs or have been unemployed. They have smoked and have indulged in drinking sprees. They have made their own living, in ways both legal and illegal. They have lived at home, independent from parental control, or have maintained their own living quarters. In other words, they have felt

like adults. The adjustments back into the teenage level of high school rules and teaching patterns are difficult for the returning students, for their younger class members, and for their teachers.

The nurse, the social worker, the counselor, the principal, and the teacher all feel the load of additional problem students in the student body. These drop outs do not drop their problems when they return to school. They need and demand more services than the average student.

These are but a few of the problems which arise when a high school makes a concerted effort to return drop outs to school.

But these problems show just one side of the picture. There are other sides. The 4% unemployment rate among last years' seniors reflects optimism to this year's students that they will receive assistance in finding a job or in going on to school even after June is over. The impact on the community brings a feeling of belonging to the parents. One mother recently called to ask the post high counselor to check on her son's grades in Junior College, "because", she said, "I know you will help me see that my son is succeeding."

This is Project 13 as it relates to the one school where the idea originated. These comments could be repeated in very special variations for the other three high schools in the Poverty Target Areas of Minneapolis.

How far should the high school counselor reach out into the community to assist former students? In Minneapolis, the answer to this question was made by the community use of the counselor's services.

Last month a widowed unemployed mother walked into the counselor's office to discuss the re-enrollment in high school of her recently divorced teen-age daughter. The counselor could and did assist the daughter with school plans. The counselor did not and could not give the

mother employment, or money, or solve the marital problems of her daughter. There were other agencies to which she was referred for these problems. Yet, she came with her daughter and stayed to discuss her own situation. Why? "Because," she said, "I know you will listen to me while I think out answers to my problems."